



Snohomish County Medical Examiner

Facilities and Equipment

Policies and Procedures

This manual contains Facilities and Equipment policies and procedures of the Medical Examiner's Office and supersedes all previous information relating to:

Facilities and Equipment Policies and Procedure

This Manual shall be effective on April 13, 2011 and will remain in effect until suspended by written directive.

Norman Thiersch, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner

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SECTION 1.0

Facilities Maintenance, Equipment and Security

1.1 Policies: Medical Examiner Facilities and Equipment Maintenance

1. The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office facilities and work areas shall be maintained to be comfortable, clean and structurally sound.
2. Private and secure lockers, changing areas and shower facilities shall be maintained for male and female employees.
3. The public areas shall be maintained clean and comfortable including the attached meeting room and viewing room which shall be maintained for use when necessary to meet with family or friends of the deceased or when necessary to make positive identification.
4. Regular and routine office cleaning shall be provided by contract services that are renewed annually.
5. Fire safety inspections shall be conducted annually; quarterly safety inspections shall be performed by the employee safety committee.
6. Fire extinguishers shall be inspected monthly and serviced or replaced every six years.

7. Mechanical refrigerator doors, hoists, shower / eyewash, and microscopes shall be maintained in good working order and inspected on a documented annual maintenance schedule.
8. Gurneys and autopsy tables are routinely checked that they are sturdy and are in good repair. If any defects are noted these shall be reported to the on-duty supervisor for corrective action.
9. The Pathology Assistant(s) shall clean and disinfect autopsy tables and dissection areas with bactericidal / viricidal solutions after each use.
10. X-ray equipment shall be periodically assessed for performance improvement, radiation protection, x-ray beam collimation, and biomedical safety.
11. Scales shall be periodically calibrated with known weights, and documentation of the calibration shall be maintained.
12. The heating and ventilation system serves the office and public portions of the building separately from the body receiving, autopsy and tissue storage facilities to prevent odors and fumes from entering the office and public areas. The county Department of Facilities Management schedules and performs annual inspection and prevention maintenance for the heating/ ventilation/air conditioning, plumbing, and electrical systems.

1.2 Security of Facilities

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office facilities are securely protected by limited access to the offices and general work areas and specifically restricted access to specialized storage and work areas which is maintained at all times. These security measures shall be enforced to ensure the following:

1. Safeguarding of human remains.
2. Safeguarding of deceased person's clothing and personal property.
3. Safeguarding of items and materials having potential evidentiary value.
4. Safeguarding of tissue, body fluids, and physical material samples obtained during the death investigation process.
5. Maintaining confidentiality of case materials, records and reports.
6. To provide a safe work environment for employees and visitors.
7. To minimize the risk of radiation, chemical, and biohazard exposure.
8. To safeguard government property (equipment, supplies, etc.)

1.2.1 Restricted Access

Access to all areas within the facilities of the Medical Examiner's Office, shall be controlled and access restricted to authorized persons.

1. The garage and employee access doors to the facility are within a fenced and gated entry.
2. The garage doors and the exterior public entry areas are monitored by video cameras with real time images displayed on monitors located in the front office and the Medical Investigators' office area.
3. Body receiving and handling is performed within the garage and inaccessible to public view. Limited supervised access to the body receiving and handling area within the garage is permitted for non-employees, such as authorized

- representatives of the funeral industry are allowed entry to the garage area for the purpose of picking-up clothing and/or bodies.
4. Entry into the office areas and refrigerated storage areas from the garage is controlled by locked doors. Entry requires a specifically issued and authorized keycard.
 5. Interior business and operations areas of the SCMEO building are secured by locked doors. Entry requires a specifically issued and authorized keycard.
 6. Each employee is issued a vehicle gate opener, building keycard and/or front lobby key, according to their business need and access authority.
 7. Each employee's keycard is programmed to allow entry according to the employee's business function and authorization. Keycard entries are monitored by an offsite computer system capable of reporting specific door of entry, date and time, and the employee to whom the keycard was issued.
 8. Authorized non-employee visitors having official, specific Medical Examiner case involvement, approved Medical Examiners operations activities, or scheduled facilities maintenance work may be authorized to enter the work areas, according to their business and operations purpose. The activities and movements of all visitors (all non-Medical Examiner staff) that are granted access to the work areas are to be monitored closely by Medical Examiner personnel at all times. Visitors shall not be allowed unauthorized access to confidential information or entry into unauthorized or restricted areas of the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office, except under specific authorization and purpose.
 9. Non-employee visitors may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to entry. Attachment A, attached at the end of this section.
 10. Employee and visitor entries and exits from the facility shall be documented (name and time of entry and exit), in the employee in/out log at the back entrance, or in the visitor log book at the front entrance.
 11. The autopsy and laboratory areas are physically separated from the other work areas, and access is controlled and restricted to authorized personnel. See the Safety Policies and Procedures, Section 3, Exposure Control, subsection 3.6 for safety and security policy provisions specific to the morgue.
 12. A separate isolation autopsy room with attached isolation refrigeration and deep freeze are located within the autopsy suite and separated from the main autopsy room. The isolation room and cold storage is used for decomposed and known infectious bodies.
 13. Evidence shall be secured and controlled in the locked storage area. Deposits shall be made using a security drop box system. Access to the evidence room shall be limited to specifically authorized personnel and monitored by an offsite computer system capable of reporting entries and identifying the keycard used. See the Evidence section in the Investigations Policy and Procedures under for provisions relating specifically to the chain of custody, security, control and maintenance of evidence.
 14. Sample storage, is located in the secure area adjoining the examination and laboratory areas. It is accessed only by authorized personnel.

15. Records storage space is secure (in locked room) and controlled within the facility. Non-employees of the office shall not be permitted unsupervised access to any records storage area.
16. The computerized information management system is protected from intrusion, unauthorized release of information, and unauthorized addition, deletion or alteration of information by security systems and operational policies and procedures that are established and maintained by the Snohomish County Department of Information Services.

**Confidentiality Agreement between Snohomish County and
Restricted Guest of the Snohomish County Medical Examiner**

Please read carefully

WHEREAS, the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office collects, documents and maintains confidential information for the purposes of providing death investigation services for the county; and

WHEREAS, the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office intends to prevent any disclosure of confidential information whether directly or inadvertently to unauthorized persons' and

WHEREAS, the Medical Examiner's Office has determined that it is in the best interest of Snohomish County to allow the person named below (hereinafter "Restricted Guest") entry into restricted areas within the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office for the purposes of

_____.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration for my entry into the Medical Examiner's Office and to protect the rights existing in and in relation to the confidential information, Restricted Guest agrees as follows:

1. SCOPE OF ACCESS AND INFORMATION

I understand and agree that I will be allowed only limited, supervised entry into restricted areas of the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office and that during the course of said access I will not intentionally be allowed access to confidential information.

2. DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.

For the purposes of this agreement, "Confidential Information" shall include any and all information relating to the death investigation, autopsy, medical or criminal history or family that is identifiable to a specific decedent.

3. OBLIGATION OF CONFIDENCE.

I understand that confidential information, whether in the form electronic data, documents or reports, bulletin boards, verbal discussion, or visual observation is private and confidential and agree that I will:

- a. comply with the limited access restrictions to prevent inadvertent or needless exposure to confidential information.
- b. not to use confidential information in any way, and
- c. not to divulge, disclose or communicate confidential information in any form or manner, directly or indirectly, to any person or other entity other than an authorized employee of the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office.

4. LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.

The obligation of confidentiality shall not apply where the information:

- a. was already known to the Restricted Guest or the public at the time of disclosure;
- b. was received by the Restricted Guest after release from the family of the decedent without restriction as to the use and disclosure of the information, and such receipt was prior to or independent of receiving any confidential information from the Medical Examiner's Office; and
- c. has become publicly known through no wrongful act or breach of this Confidentiality Agreement.

5. GOVERNING LAW AND VENUE

The laws of the State of Washington shall govern this agreement and any action at law, suit in equity, or judicial proceeding for the enforcement of any provision of this agreement shall be in the Superior Court of Snohomish County, Everett, Washington.

6. NO THIRD PARTY BENEFICIARY

It is the specific intent of Snohomish County that this agreement shall not confer third party beneficiary status on any non-party, including the citizens of Snohomish County.

7. INDEMNIFICATION AND REMEDY FOR BREACH.

In addition to Snohomish County's ability to seek injunctive and other equitable and legal relief, Restricted Guest shall hold harmless, indemnify and defend the County, its officers, officials, employees and agents, from and against any and all claims, actions, suits, liability, loss, expenses, damages and judgments of any nature whatsoever, including costs and attorney's fees in defense thereof, caused by or arising out of the Restricted Guest's acts, errors or omissions in breach of this Confidentiality Agreement.

8. ENTIRE AGREEMENT AND AMENDMENTS

This agreement contains all of the agreements between the parties with respect to any matter covered or mentioned in the agreement, and no prior agreement, letter of intent, or understanding relating to any such matter will be effective for any purpose. No provision in this agreement may be amended or added to except by an agreement in writing signed by the parties and using the same formalities as are required for the execution of this agreement.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by all of the terms of this Confidentiality Agreement as a condition of my entry into the Medical Examiner's Office.

Restricted Guest Name (Please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: : _____

SECTION 2.0

Periodic Calibration of Thermometers

2.1 Purpose

To establish guidelines for periodic calibration of thermometers located at the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office (SCMEO).

2.2 Background

The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) recommends that "scientific equipment items that require periodic cleaning, adjustment or maintenance, such as microscopes, freezers and coolers...(be)...on a documented and appropriate maintenance schedule." They also ask: "are temperature monitoring devices present on each refrigerator and freezer space, is there an alarm system to warn of deviations from the acceptable range, and are monitoring records kept?"

The small stand-alone refrigerators are not on an automated monitoring system and so much be checked daily to ensure that their temperatures remain within accepted ranges. This process is further described in the Investigations section document, "Investigators Daily Census of Bodies and Facilities Checklist." However, to ensure that they actually measure what they are designed to measure, the thermometers themselves that are used to perform these checks must be verified against a thermometer of known accuracy.

2.3 Policy

Thermometers shall be annually calibrated against a standard thermometer of known accuracy. This annual calibration shall be documented and documentation of the calibration shall be maintained.

2.4 Responsibilities

Responsibilities for this Policy/Procedure are as follows:

1. All departmental personnel are responsible for reading and knowing the contents of this document.
2. The Deputy Director for Administration will maintain thermometer calibration as an annual calendar item and will make appropriate notification to the senior Autopsy Technician.
3. The senior Autopsy Assistant shall perform annual thermometer calibration and will report any problems or issues. This individual will provide the completed calibration record to the Accounting Technician II.
4. The Accounting Technician II will maintain the thermometer calibration records.

5. The Chief Medical Examiner or his/her delegate is responsible for annual review of this document and any necessary revisions.

2.5 Thermometers present at SCMEO

Currently, there are three thermometers present at SCMEO that require periodic calibration; these are:

1. A thermometer located in the autopsy room stand-alone refrigerator; and
2. The thermometers in the two autopsy room stand-alone freezers.

2.6 Process and schedule for calibration

The following process will occur on an annual basis:

1. Scheduling: The Deputy Director for Administration keeps as an annual calendar event "Thermometer Calibration." The Deputy Director will notify the senior Autopsy Assistant, who will follow the steps below. Any calibration issues will be relayed immediately to the Chief Medical Examiner (CME) or the CME's delegate. Any necessary corrective actions (such as thermometer replacement) will be documented and maintained in the thermometer calibration portion of the Scales, Thermometers and Microscopes Maintenance & Calibration binder (maintained by the Accounting Technician II).
2. Reference Thermometer: A digital thermometer (of the type used by the investigators for death scene investigation) will be used as the reference thermometer. Its accuracy should be verified by placing its tip in a cup of ice water for one minute (the temperature should read $32 \pm 1^\circ$ Fahrenheit). Next a large cup of water should be boiled (this can be done in the microwave oven) and the thermometer tested again. The temperature should read $212 \pm 1^\circ$ Fahrenheit.
3. Thermometer comparison: The reference thermometer and the three thermometers to be tested should be placed in the same area (for example, within the same refrigerator). The four thermometers should be given several minutes to come to equilibrium. The three tested thermometers and the reference thermometer should all be within 2° Fahrenheit of each other.
4. Documentation: The above procedure will be documented on enclosure (a). This documentation paperwork will be maintained as described in the next paragraph.

2.7 Documentation and Records Storage

The final step is to properly maintain documentation of calibration. Calibration records will be maintained in a special thermometer calibration section of the Scales, Thermometers and Microscopes Maintenance & Calibration binder. These may be maintained indefinitely.

SECTION 3.0

Periodic Maintenance and Service of Microscopes

3.1 Purpose

To establish guidelines for periodic maintenance and service of microscopes located at the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office (SCMEO).

3.2 Background

The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) recommends that "...scientific equipment items that require periodic cleaning, adjustment or maintenance, such as microscopes... (be) on a documented and appropriate maintenance schedule."

3.3 Policy

According to the SCMEO Policy & Procedures Manual, Chapter 1, Facilities Maintenance and Security, "Mechanical refrigerator doors, hoists, shower / eyewash, and microscopes shall be maintained in good working order and inspected on a documented annual maintenance schedule."

3.4 Responsibilities

Responsibilities for this Policy/Procedure are as follows:

1. All departmental personnel are responsible for reading and knowing the contents of this document;
2. The senior Autopsy Assistant shall assist and coordinate microscope maintenance and service vendor visits and will report any problems or issues, as described below;
3. The Accounting Technician II will contact the vendor annually, will make necessary payments, and will maintain microscope maintenance and service records.
4. The Deputy Director for Administration will maintain microscope maintenance and service as an annual calendar item and will make appropriate notification to the Accounting Technician II.
5. The Chief Medical Examiner or his/her delegate is responsible for annual review of this document and any necessary revisions.

3.5 Microscopes present at SCMEO

Currently, the three microscopes present at SCMEO that require periodic maintenance and service include:

1. The microscopes that are located in each pathologist's office; and
2. The dissecting microscope in the autopsy room.

3.6 Process and schedule for maintenance and service

The following process will occur on an annual basis:

1. The Deputy Director for Administration keeps as an annual calendar event “Microscope Maintenance and service.” The Deputy Director will ask the Accounting Technician II to contact the microscope maintenance and service vendor.
2. The Accounting Technician II will call and schedule a maintenance and service visit. The Accounting Technician II will notify the senior Autopsy Assistant of the scheduled visit.

The current vendor is:

NME
National Microscope Exchange
11405 W. Lake Joy Dr. NE
Carnation, WA 98014
(425) 788-2662
Fax: (425) 788-3563

The Accounting Technician II will also make any necessary payments to the vendor and will maintain microscope maintenance and service records (see “Documentation and Records Storage”, below).

3. The senior Autopsy Assistant will facilitate the maintenance and service visit, assisting the visiting microscope technicians as necessary. Prior to the arrival of the visiting microscope technician, the senior Autopsy Assistant will make inquiries to both pathologists regarding any known microscope performance problems (“glitches”). After the technical visit, any maintenance and service issues will be relayed immediately to the Chief Medical Examiner (CME) or the CME’s delegate. Any corrective actions, if necessary, will be documented and maintained in the microscope maintenance and service binder.
4. Documentation paperwork will be maintained as described in the next paragraph.

3.7 Documentation and Records Storage

The final step is to properly maintain documentation of maintenance and service. Maintenance and service records will be maintained in a special microscope maintenance and service binder created for this purpose. Maintenance logs, once superseded, should be maintained at least three years. Maintenance reports should be maintained at least one year.

SECTION 4.0

Periodic Calibration of Scales

4.1 Purpose

To establish guidelines for periodic calibration of scales located at the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office (SCMEO).

4.2 Background

The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) recommends that there be "a written scale calibration policy with documentation (i.e., when calibrated, by whom)."

4.3 Policy

According to the SCMEO Policy & Procedures Manual, Chapter 1, Facilities Maintenance and Security, "scales shall be periodically calibrated with known weights, and documentation of the calibration shall be maintained."

4.4 Responsibilities

Responsibilities for this Policy/Procedure are as follows:

1. All departmental personnel are responsible for reading and knowing the contents of this document;
2. The senior Autopsy Assistant shall assist and coordinate scale calibration vendor visits and will report any problems or issues, as described below;
3. The Accounting Technician II will contact the vendor annually, will make necessary payments, and will maintain scale calibration records.
4. The Deputy Director for Administration will maintain scale calibration as an annual calendar item and will make appropriate notification to the Accounting Technician II.
5. The Chief Medical Examiner or his/her delegate is responsible for annual review of this document and any necessary revisions.

4.5 Scales present at SCMEO

Currently, scales present at SCMEO that require periodic calibration include:

1. The body weight scale located in the autopsy room;
2. The two digital organ weight scales in the autopsy room; and
3. The small pan balance used for infant organ weights.

4.6 Process and schedule for calibration

The following process will occur on an annual basis:

1. The Deputy Director for Administration keeps as an annual calendar event "Scale Calibration." The Deputy Director will ask the Accounting Technician II to contact the scale calibration vendor.

2. The Accounting Technician II will call and schedule a calibration visit. The Accounting Technician II will notify the senior Autopsy Assistant of the scheduled visit.

The current vendor is:
PACIFIC NORTHWEST SCALE CO., INC.
9007 36TH STREET S.E.
SNOHOMISH, WA 98290
(425) 259-4720
(800) 840-4720
(425) 259-4720 (fax)

The Accounting Technician II will also make any necessary payments to the vendor and will maintain scale calibration records (see “Documentation and Records Storage”, below).

3. The senior Pathology Assistant will facilitate the calibration visit, assisting the visiting scale technicians as necessary. Prior to the arrival of the visiting scale technician, the senior Autopsy Assistant will make inquiries to both pathologists regarding any known scale performance problems (“glitches”). After the technical visit, any calibration issues will be relayed immediately to the Chief Medical Examiner (CME) or the CME’s delegate. Any corrective actions, if necessary, will be documented and maintained in the scale calibration binder.
5. Documentation paperwork will be maintained as described in the next paragraph.

4.7 Documentation and Records Storage

The final step is to properly maintain documentation of calibration. Calibration records will be maintained in a special scale calibration binder created for this purpose.

Maintenance logs, once superseded, should be maintained at least three years.

Maintenance reports should be maintained at least one year.

SECTION 5.0

Automated Equipment

5.1 Policy

It is the policy of the SCMEO to adhere to the Snohomish County Information Services communications and automated equipment policies found at G:\Information Services\Policies and Procedures\Policies. Specifically, employees' are required to comply with Communication Systems Usage Policy Number DIS-002. The goal of this policy is to ensure security of Snohomish county communications systems, the economical, effective and efficient management of County communications systems and to ensure that employees use these systems in a professional manner that reflects positively upon the county.

5.2 Use for County Business Purposes Only.

5.2.1 The automation equipment is County property and may be used for County business purposes only.

5.2.2 Use of County property is intended to facilitate the timely and efficient conduct of County business.

5.2.3 The term "County business purposes" means the official work of County government undertaken for the public benefit, as opposed to activities undertaken for personal, non-County or other private purposes.

5.3 Office and Cellular Telephones.

The County's telephones may be used for County business purposes only with the following exception: an infrequent and urgent personal call such as an unexpected change in schedule or a medical or childcare emergency. Personal long distance calls and personal cellular phone calls are not allowed except in an emergency and with prior supervisor approval.

5.4 Copy or Fax Machines.

The County's copy and fax machines may be used for County business purposes only with the following exception: infrequent and urgent use of the fax machine or copy machine may be permitted when doing so will save you from leaving the office or interrupting your workday. If used, reimburse the department twenty-five cents (\$0.25) per copy or per fax page.

5.5 Internet.

5.5.1 The County's Internet capabilities may be used for County business purposes only.

5.5.2 The term "County's Internet capabilities" means any and all access to the Internet obtained through County sponsorship, ownership, or financial contribution, or by any employee or officer as a representative or agent of Snohomish County, and/or during work hours.

5.5.3 Unacceptable sites or uses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Pornographic sites and access to pornographic materials.
- Sports or games.
- Chat rooms or blogs.
- Personal e-mail access (hotmail, excite, yahoo, etc.)
- Any site that charges a fee (unless there has been prior written approval of justified County expense item by supervisor).
- Vendor sites to purchase personal items.
- Marketing of personal or private business.

5.5.4 No County employee or officer shall be authorized to use the County's Internet capabilities until he or she has signed a document indicating that the employee or officer has read and agrees to be bound by the terms of this policy.

5.5.5 E-mail is a form of written communication and must be treated in the same manner as a paper document of the same nature. Each employee is responsible for maintaining a paper copy of those e-mail communications the employee receives or sends which the employee would have an obligation to retain if created on paper.

5.6 Electronic Communications Are Not Private or Confidential.

5.6.1 All communications utilizing the County's equipment are the property of Snohomish County and may be public records under the Public Disclosure Act (RCW 42.17).

5.6.2 There are no rights to individual privacy in any communications or information obtained through the County's automation capabilities.

5.7 E-mail Etiquette

5.7.1 All E-mail shall be professional and courteous. See SCC 3A.12.010 (2). E-mail shall not contain epithets, harassing or derogatory comments based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, marital status, gender, or sexual orientation.

5.7.2 Broadcast messages to all employees on the cooperative local area network must be approved by the Department Director prior to being sent.

5.8 Virus Protection and Handling of Unwanted E-mail

5.8.1 At the end of your work shift log off (select “Restart”); leave the power on. This will allow the county virus protection to be updated when necessary while protecting your workstation.

5.8.2 If you do not recognize the source of E-mail do not open the E-mail. Delete the E-mail and empty your trash bin.

5.8.3 If you receive unsolicited E-mail from a recognized source and the E-mail does not comply with this policy, promptly reply by E-mail to discourage the sender with the following or similar message to the sender:

“Snohomish County government facilities may only be used for county business purposes. Please limit all future use of this E-mail address to communication that is county business related.”